

## **What's Wrong with Gambling? Giving Greed a Place**

By Weston Ware and Ferrell Foster

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains (1 Timothy 6:10).*

Love is often celebrated, but the object of the love determines if it is good or bad. Love of God, spouse, children, neighbors, compassion, justice, freedom, and salvation are all good. Scripture, however, warns of the love of money. And the love of money can be summed up in one word -- greed.

Gambling often elevates financial or material gain to a dominant place in a person's life. Hence it runs counter to Jesus' insistence that we cannot at the same time love God and money. Preoccupation with material gain ignores the biblical warnings against greed.

The love of money becomes the source of many kinds of evil -- selfishness, cheating, lying, oppression, and theft. And in its most extreme forms it can even lead to murder. It even leads to gambling -- to risking a small amount of money in hopes of garnering more money.

Even the small-time gambler and the occasional bettor contribute to a pattern of greed and the exaltation of the false god of wealth.

*And he [Jesus] said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).*

The insatiable desire for gain, all too common in American culture, often wrecks lives. The essence of godly living consists in the love of God and neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40), in friendships (John 15:13), in contentment and gratitude (Philippians 4:11), in peace (1 Corinthians 14:33), and in enriching family relationships (Matthew 19:4-5).

Participation in gambling is driven by and encourages personal greed, but there is a larger promotion of greed, as well. A whole industry surrounds gambling, and this industry is built on siphoning money from workers pockets and out of communities.

Appeals for legalized gambling generally stem from crass materialistic motives. Proponents may plead for freedom, recreation, and entertainment. Sometimes they urge us to capitulate to the inevitable. "People will always gamble," they say, "so why not legalize it and tax it?"

Behind all of these arguments, however, lies the economic self-interest of pro-gambling groups. The main motive is materialistic gain, with little regard for moral and social consequences.

The so-called economic benefits that allegedly follow a policy of legalized gambling come only to a few people. A few commercial interests may profit from increased tourism related to gambling; but this is at the price of allowing the gambling industry to weave a web of influence and control over a city or state's life. Society as a whole actually suffers great losses in wrecked lives, misappropriated funds, wasted paychecks, and undermined family life. Other businesses also suffer because of the money siphoned from the normal economy.

Obedience to the will of God, who is our sovereign authority, displaces subservience to false gods such as chance, fate, or "Lady Luck."

Acceptance of God's rule in our lives directs our loyalties to God and service to others. It leads us to reject the tendency toward materialism. In other words, the love of God and neighbor has no place for the love of money.

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